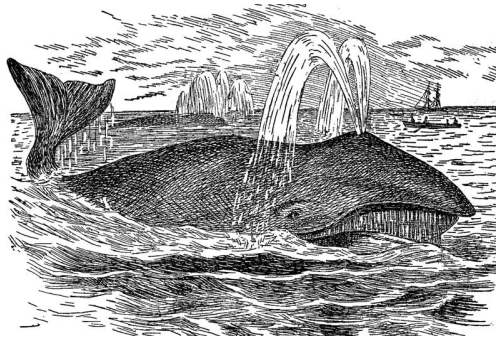


The Sign of Jonah



*Was the Messiah in the
grave for 72 Hours?*

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The Sign of Jonah

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All quotations of Scripture are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

SEC = Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

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Contents

Introduction 5

Chapter 1: Two Sabbaths in the Gospels? 9

Chapter 2: The 17th of Aviv 23

Chapter 3: The Road to Emmaus 27

Chapter 4: The Wave Sheaf Offering 29

Chapter 5: Daniel's Prophecy 31

Chapter 6: Understanding Matthew 12:40 33

Bibliography of Abbreviated Books 43

INTRODUCTION

THERE ARE MANY Bible believers who have given attention to the duration of the Messiah's entombment. One famous passage, often quoted by many commencing a conversation of the subject, is found in Matthew 12:40. "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Those who espouse to what they call a *literal* interpretation of this verse believe that what our Messiah here is that He would be entombed (in the grave) for a total of 72 hours, no more, no less.¹

The Messiah Himself said in John 11:9 "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Upon realizing this, we can know that this means there are also twelve hours in the night. Three days, would then be three full and complete twelve hour days, and three nights would be three full and complete twelve hour nights, composing a total time of 72 hours. Furthermore, one Biblical passage tells us that the Messiah said he would rise *after* three days. According to the 72 hour proponents, this would mean anything *less* than a 72 hour entombment would not satisfy the term *after*. Seeing that even another passage states that the Messiah would rise *in* three days, they reason that anything more than 72 hours would not satisfy the term *in*. Even further evidence may be found in the purchasing of the burial spices by the women desiring to anoint the body of the Messiah. While the gospel according to Mark tells us that spices were bought *after* the Sabbath, Luke's gospel mentions preparing spices and ointments *before* the Sabbath. How could the women prepare spices they had not even bought? This could only happen if two Sabbaths occurred in the week of the crucifixion, i.e. a "high day Sabbath," and a weekly Sabbath. So, this teaching has to be absolutely true, or is it?

I am not about to attack anyone who chooses to believe that the Messiah was entombed for a total of 72 hours, or that there were two Sabbaths in the week of the crucifixion. I can honestly see how a person can believe such a teaching. I will, however, make an effort to show you the many reasons why I personally cannot accept this view. I feel my reasons are intelligent and logical, and need to be examined by the diligent seeker of truth. My reason for bringing this matter to fruition is twofold:

1. I want to believe what is true. Truth is paramount in my life. To me, any willful rejection of truth is at least in some way a rejection of the Messiah.
2. There have been out-of-the-order statements made by some 72 hour proponents, against those not accepting such a teaching.

¹ This is the view taken by those holding to a "Wednesday Crucifixion" or a "Fourth Day of the Week Crucifixion". There are some holding to a "Thursday (or Fifth Day) Crucifixion" which do not believe 72 hours had to elapse during the Messiah's entombment. They do however embrace that parts of 3 daylights and parts of 3 night times had to of taken place. Anyone wishing to study on the relevance of a Thursday/Fifth Day crucifixion should consult Brooke Foss Westcott's, *An Introduction to the Study of the Gospels/6th edition*/Cambridge and London, 1881 pages. 343-349. However, this booklet will also deny a Thursday/Fifth day crucifixion with the arguments which are given throughout. I believe the Gospels bear witness that the Messiah died on the preparation of the weekly Sabbath, thus denying both of the theories above.

I hope that which ever way Yahweh² leads us to believe on this matter, we can be respectful to one another.

Harmonizing the Scriptures

In studying any Biblical topic we need to realize that we must take all of what the Scriptures say on a subject, and not just pull one verse out here or there or one verse of its context. A verse in the Psalms, from the *New American Standard Bible*, comes to mind. "The sum of thy word is truth... (Psalm 119:160)" I feel that this passage has been overlooked by many people holding to a 72 hour entombment. They seem to ignore, intentionally or unintentionally, what the rest of the Bible has to say on the subject. They seem to do an excellent job in declaring why they hold to their position, but rarely, and even then in a limited fashion, does one find them dealing with the rebuttals given by the opposing side. According to them, a person is not accepting the true Messiah if they do not believe that Yeshua³ was entombed for 72 hours. I must point out that not all those who accept this teaching believe that the opposing position rejects the Messiah, but *most* people that I *personally* have encountered do. It is almost impossible to even speak to them at times.

A conversation with a man I had a few years ago explains the difficulty accurately. After a delightful Sabbath worship, we began to discuss the Scriptures in general just outside of the building as we approached our vehicles. I forget what prompted his question, but as we were talking, he just calmly asked me what I thought about the 72 hour teaching. I very calmly returned an answer, "I do not believe there were two Sabbaths in the crucifixion week." Boy was I not expecting his response at the time! "That would mean that the Messiah could not have been in the grave for 72 hours!" he said. He then told me that he would not be able to continue our conversation, and turned around and walked away. These situations are not what I consider a diligent longing to know what is true. We should be willing to sacrifice any doctrine we may hold at the present time on the altar of truth. At the same time, this must be balanced with a firm regard for the truth. We should not accept any teaching that comes along. I know of people who hear something once and automatically believe it because it "sounds good" or "touches their heart." We are called to be Bereans (Acts 17:11). This means that before we believe and accept a doctrine to be factual, we must examine it carefully and prayerfully, not being tossed about with every wind of doctrine that blows by.

Comparing Passages

As we begin our search, we should notice in the Bible that when Yeshua refers to His death and resurrection, He often uses the term, *the third day*. Once, in Matthew 12:40, He uses the terminology *three days and three nights*, to describe His duration of time in

² Yahweh is the personal, proper name of the heavenly Father in Scripture. Everywhere the words LORD, GOD, OR Jehovah appear in the Old Testament portion of the Scripture, the underlying Hebrew text reads YHWH, pronounced Yahweh. For an in-depth study on this name write for the book *Hallowed be Thy Name*.

³ Yeshua is the personal, proper, and original name of the Messiah, and is preferred by the author.

what He refers to as *the heart of the earth*. However, in Matthew 12:40, any direct reference to a death or resurrection is conspicuously absent.

The Third Day	Three Days and Three Nights
Matthew 17:23	Matthew 12:40
Matthew 20:19	
Mark 9:31	
Mark 10:34	
Luke 9:22	
Luke 18:33	
Luke 24:46	

I could use many more passages which mention the third day in reference to the Messiah's resurrection, but I have limited the passages to those which are from the very mouth of Yeshua the Messiah, just as Matthew 12:40. This table, once again, shows that for the majority of the time the Messiah chose to use the phrase the third day when speaking of His resurrection. Let me clarify what I am not doing in the above chart. I am not suggesting that we pit Scripture against Scripture. I am not a fan of pitting Scripture against Scripture. As in the case at hand, I am not demanding that we ignore the one time⁴ the Messiah uses the terminology three days and three nights. I am simply asking you to realize that this term may just so happen to be *defined* by the other (majority) third day passages. If one passage doesn't seem to fit into the puzzle, we may be able to determine through strict exegesis what the original intent of the passage was when it was written. Along with this, we need to realize the possibility that perhaps the phrase *heart of the earth* may not be a phrase referring to the grave. Concerning the aforementioned chart let us ask ourselves this question: what does the phrase *the third day* denote?

Third Day Passages

There are many passages in the Bible that plainly teach us the meaning of the phrase *the third day*. In Genesis 22 we read of Abraham being tested by Yahweh, as Yahweh told him to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. We then read that, "Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled an ass." Further on we read, "Then on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes."⁵ The point being that the third day was reckoned from day one, and did not denote three full and complete twenty-four hour days. In Exodus 19:10-11, just before the giving of the law of Yahweh, we read the following:

And Yahweh said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day Yahweh will come down in the sight of all the people...

⁴ I believe that when discussing scripture, only one witness is needed to prove a particular point. We must have two or more witnesses to condemn or accuse a man, however, Yahweh has to say something only once, and it is sufficient. We are to live by every word that proceeds out of his mouth (Deuteronomy 8:3).

⁵ Genesis 22: 1-4

Here, the term *today* expresses whatever part of the first day remained, *tomorrow* would have to be the next day, and the *third day* referred to the day after tomorrow, at any time. In Leviticus 19:5-7 we learn that a sacrifice of peace offerings unto Yahweh may be eaten on the same day you offer it or on the morrow, but if any is left to *the third day* it should be burnt with fire. We see the same sequence in First Samuel 20:12 during David and Jonathan's conversation on the day before the new moon.

And Jonathan said unto David, O Yahweh God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, or the third day...

Here, the day they were speaking in was day one. Following this day was tomorrow, and then of course comes the third day. There are also other examples to be given, but I feel that these successfully prove that the phrase the third day can mean and often means *the day after tomorrow*. Thus for those who believe the Messiah was crucified on the 14th, the weekly/annual Sabbath took place on the 15th, and the Messiah rose from the grave on the 16th, this scenario fits the third day precedent perfectly.

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify: and the third day he shall be raised up. (Matthew 20:18-19)

The third day here is reckoned from the day of the crucifixion. Crucifixion day being day one, the morrow being day two, and then obviously you would have the third day. This method is known as *inclusive reckoning*,⁷ a method we will detail a little later in this treatise.

This could definitely be the time period the Messiah was speaking of in the previously cited seven passages on the given chart.

⁶ There are some who teach the Messiah was crucified on the 15th of Aviv, while even fewer teach a 13th of Aviv crucifixion. I've chosen to use the most accepted time frame of the 14th, and I do feel it is the best scriptural choice.

⁷ Inclusive is defined by *Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary of the English Language* as, "Inclosing; encircling... Comprehended in the number or sum; as from Monday to Saturday inclusive, that is taking in both Monday and Saturday."

Chapter 1

TWO SABBATHS IN THE GOSPELS?

ONE SHOULD EASILY realize, that in order for the Messiah to be entombed for 72 hours, there would, of necessity, have to be two Sabbaths in the week of His crucifixion. Most people believing the 72 hour teaching do believe that the “high day Sabbath,” was on the 15th day of Aviv, but the regular weekly Sabbath was on the 17th of Aviv. Do we obtain these facts from the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, or is this a hypothesis found wanting?

Mark's Account

First of all, Mark mentions the day of the Messiah's death as having the title of *the preparation*. “And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath. (Mark 15:42)” Notice very carefully that Mark describes this word preparation as “That is, the day before the Sabbath.” It was on this day of preparation that the Messiah was crucified. Mark shows that he was speaking of a regularly occurring day. He simply explains in more details to the reader which day the preparation was. In case the reader did not know which day the preparation was, Mark clarifies his speech by saying it was the day before the Sabbath. The reader would of a surety understand that the Sabbath mentioned would be the weekly Sabbath. You would not make this sort of a statement if you wished to convey this particular Sabbath as only being an annual Sabbath. As one writer put it, “If he was trying to explain that “the preparation” here meant something different – the day before the Sabbath on Thursday, he failed to make his point very clear.”⁸ Secondly, we must discover the origin and meaning of the term *preparation*, when found in relation to the word Sabbath. We find an interesting verse in light of this term in the book of Exodus 16, as Yahweh gives instructions on what the children of Israel were to do with the manna given to them on the sixth day of the week. “And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.” (Exodus 16:5)

Hopefully you caught the key word in this passage, it being *prepare*. This word prepare had the meaning of preparing the manna, or in other words, the preparation of the manna for the Sabbath. The main point to notice here, is that the term preparation had the primary meaning of *food preparation* for the weekly Sabbath.⁹ Therefore, the fact that the day of the crucifixion is called the day of preparation

⁸ TDTN-RLS, p. 9

⁹ In TCR, p. 35-39, Samuele Bacchiocchi gives additional evidence that the term preparation (Greek = *paraskeue*) was a technical term signifying the sixth day of the week. In one argument he quotes Mr. Norval Geldenhuys in his Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, 1983, p. 664. This quote is made on pp. 38-39 of TCR, and is as follows:

This conclusion ignores the fact, cogently stated by Norval Geldenhuys, “that at the time when John wrote, the Greek term *paraskeue* (‘preparation’) was already for a long time the technical term used to indicate ‘Friday,’ the equivalent of the Hebrew *erebh shabbath*.

strongly suggests that the Sabbath that followed was the regular weekly Sabbath, which would have fallen on the 15th day of Aviv.

We then read in Mark 16:1 that, "...when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought sweet spices that they might come and anoint him." A good question would be, when WHAT Sabbath was past? Could it possibly be the only Sabbath previously mentioned? This would be the most logical way to see this, seeing that Mark doesn't so much as even hint at another Sabbath day occurring anywhere else within the timing of the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah. In conclusion, we then have mention of the first day of the week in Mark 16:2. "And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came early to the sepulcher at the rising of the sun."

This first day of the week followed right after the Sabbath, which followed right after the day of the preparation. Thus we have a preparation, Sabbath, and first day sequence of events surrounding the timing of the death, burial and resurrection.

Luke's Account

Next I would like to examine Luke's chronology of the events which took place during this specific week. He tells us in Luke 23:50-52, that a man named Joseph, of the city of Arimathea, begged for the body of the Messiah. He managed to obtain our Messiah's body, and he then, "Took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein never a man before was laid." (Luke 23:53)

Brother Luke then tells us that this day was "The day of the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on." (Luke 23:54) We then read: "And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how His body was laid, and they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." (Luke 23:55-56)

A simple reading of the text has the women beholding the laying of the body on the 14th, then they return (obviously from beholding the body) and prepare spices and ointments on the 14th, and rest the weekly Sabbath day, which would be the 15th of Aviv, according to the commandment. Although I feel this is easy to see, some claim this Sabbath to be the 17th day of the month of Aviv. However, this would place two entire days between verses which clearly show that the weekly Sabbath came directly after the day of preparation. It is not sound or logical reasoning for us to believe that Luke mentions the women beholding how the body was laid, and then speaks of them returning from some other place, unknown to us, and any other reader of Luke's evangel. Yet, this is what one has to believe in order to hold to a 72 hour entombment. Furthermore, it is inconsistent with the context to demand that the Sabbath day of verse 56 is not the same Sabbath day of verse 54. An exegetical reading of the historical account has the weekly Sabbath coming directly after the preparation.

Luke then mentions that, "Upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher." (Luke 24:1) This teaches us a preparation, a Sabbath, and first day sequence once again. We should note here that both Mark and Luke agree that the visit to the tomb took place very early in the morning on the first day of the week, this is abundantly clear.

What about the Spices?

Although I feel I have given sufficient evidence from these two gospel accounts, that there was a 14th, 15th, and 16th¹⁰, sequence of events involved in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah, an objection involving the spices bought, and brought, by certain women, is almost always given by those holding to the 72 hour entombment.

As I stated at the beginning of this treatise; Mark records that spices were bought *after* the Sabbath, while Luke records spices were prepared *before* the Sabbath. The question arises, how can you prepare spices you've not bought? The answer is that you can't! However, for one to believe this, he has to assume that the spices mentioned by Mark and Luke were the exact same spices; then and only then could the two Sabbaths be proven. Could there be two sets of spices in question here?

The spices in Luke's account were prepared before the Sabbath. The text mentions nothing of the women buying this set of spices, so they probably had them handy at one of their respective homes. If they did not happen to have them handy, these items could be obtained on very short notice. We find this to be factual in that, "Nicodemus, which at the first came to Yeshua by night... brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight." (John 19:39)

Nicodemus managed to obtain a hundred pound of myrrh and aloes for the body of the Messiah. Some may object to this because of an alternative reading noted by the great commentator Adam Clarke. However, notice *all* of what Adam Clarke has to say concerning this verse.

Some have objected that a hundred pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes was enough to embalm two hundred dead bodies; and instead of, a hundred, some critics have proposed to read —a mixture of myrrh and aloes, of about a pound EACH. See Bowyer's Conjectures. But it may be observed that great quantities of spices were used for embalming dead bodies, when they intended to show peculiar marks of respect to the deceased. A great quantity was used at the funeral of Aristobulus; and it is said that five hundred servants bearing aromatics attended the funeral of Herod: see Josephus, Ant. b. xv. c. 3, s. 4; and b. xvii. c. 8, s. 3: and fourscore pounds of spices were used at the funeral of R. Gamaliel the elder.¹¹

Upon reading this commentary, we can clearly see that Nicodemus most likely brought a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, as the Messiah was probably held in high esteem by him,¹² but whether a mixture or a hundred pounds, the fact remains that Nicodemus was apparently able to obtain these spices on very short notice.¹³ Not only do we have this evidence, showing burial spices did not take a great amount of time to obtain or prepare, but we should also note what author Ralph Woodrow states in his book on this same subject.

¹⁰ This could also be termed as a preparation, Sabbath, first-day sequence.

¹¹ ACCNT

¹² We do not hear much of Nicodemus in the Gospels or the New Testament writings. However, his conversation with the Messiah in John 3 must have impacted him greatly. John 7:50 may also be a reference to this Nicodemus.

¹³ Please take note that the account says nothing of Nicodemus buying any spices. As with Nicodemus, the women, (although it is not specifically mentioned where from), bought or obtained spices, somehow.

...there is no reason to assume that a whole day was required to prepare spices! In Jewish practice, burial followed soon after death, usually the same day. When Ananias died – they “wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him,” the whole procedure being completed within “three hours” (Acts 5:6, 7). Lazarus was buried the *same day he died*, for when Jesus arrived he had been in the tomb “four days already” and had “been dead four days” (John 11:17, 39). Nicodemus provided a considerable quantity of spices, seemingly in a short time, when he hurriedly helped prepare the body of Jesus for burial (John 19:39, 40)... Because burials followed so soon after death, it is evident it did not take long to prepare burial spices.¹⁴

There is absolutely nothing in Scripture to insinuate that the Jews’ preparation of burial spices took a great amount of time, they were obviously prepared quite easily and quite quickly. Thus the women, after leaving the burial sight, would have had plenty of time to prepare a portion of spices and ointments before resting the Sabbath day.

Seeing that the Messiah died at the ninth hour (Matthew 27:46-50), and that most authorities place this at around 3:00 p.m., there would be *at the very least* three hours until the following day commenced. This places the beginning of the next day at 6:00 p.m. The body of the Messiah was taken off of the tree, the women beheld the body and how it was laid, and then as Luke tells us they, “Returned, and prepared spices and ointments.” (Luke 23:56)

We then encounter the spices mentioned by Mark. Mark, once again, tells us that, “When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.” (Mark 16:1) The spices mentioned here were obviously not the same spices mentioned in Luke. Perhaps the women felt they needed more spices out of respect for the deceased body of Yeshua. After the Sabbath, they purchased other spices, possibly to go along with the ones they had already prepared. We should also notice that while spices and ointments were prepared *before* the Sabbath, only spices (not ointments) were bought *after* the Sabbath. This would be further evidence of two sets of spices.

Furthermore, consider the possibility of there being a difference between the women mentioned in Luke that prepared spices and ointments before the Sabbath, and the women mentioned in Mark which bought spices after the Sabbath. While Mark clearly points out that Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, were the women who bought spices after the Sabbath; the women which prepared spices and ointments before the Sabbath, are described in Luke 23:55 as “The women... which came with him from Galilee.” Luke 24:10 then makes mention of the two groups of women when he states, “It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them.” This *possibly* suggests that some of the women prepared spices and ointments before the Sabbath, while other women waited until after the Sabbath was past, and decided to buy spices.

An interesting point for one to consider is that a 72 hour teaching has the women buying and preparing spices only after the annual Sabbath of the 15th. It in turn teaches that the 16th of Aviv was the preparation for the weekly Sabbath. Thus giving the women an entire day to buy spices, prepare spices, and anoint the body of their beloved Messiah. Yet this teaching claims that the women decided to wait until either

¹⁴ TDTN-RLS, p. 18

the end of the Sabbath day or the first day of the week. This has them arriving to anoint a body over 72 hours old. What did the woman, Martha, say to Yeshua when he asked that the stone be removed from Lazarus' tomb?

Yeshua said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Master, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days. (John 11:39)

Why wait the entire day of preparation and then attempt to put aromatic spices on a body over 72 hours old? One writer I am aware of¹⁵ attempts to prove that the reason the women did not come to anoint the Messiah's body was because they found Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, and a Roman seal engraved into the stone. Though this may sound logical on the surface, those believing this are simply assuming, without any Scriptural precedent, that the women even made an attempt to come to the tomb on what they believe to be the 16th of Aviv (weekly preparation day). If we read the Gospels with the mindset of a 72 hour entombment, they do not give us any evidence that the women even attempted to come to anoint the body on this supposed "day between the Sabbaths." To say that a Roman seal prohibited these women from anointing the Messiah's body is a hypothetical claim.

If anything has been learned in this dissertation on the spices and ointments, it should be that one cannot conclude from the accounts in Mark and Luke that there had to be two Sabbaths on two differing days. I have shown that an alternative, logical, and, most importantly, Scriptural explanation can be given which gives credence to a 14th, 15th, and 16th sequence of events in the week of the crucifixion.

John's Account

What about John's account? Doesn't John clearly show that the Sabbath day in the crucifixion week was *only* the first day of unleavened bread? Quite the contrary is actually the case. In John 19:31 we find that the Jews wanted to get the bodies off of the trees as soon as possible, because of the day that awaited them. "The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was a high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken." (John 19:31)

I have heard many people say the following concerning this verse: "Don't you know that the Sabbath after the Messiah's death was a high day Sabbath?" However, no Scripture has been given to prove this. This passage does not say that this was a "High Day Sabbath," not at all; it rather says "That Sabbath day *was* a high day." There is a difference. Notice the following:

In our community there is a fine museum which a large number of people purposely choose to visit on the first Tuesday of each month. The reason is simple: on that Tuesday the admission is free! If we were to say: "Many people went to the museum on Tuesday (for that Tuesday was a free day,)" no one would suppose this was a different day of the week than any other Tuesday.¹⁶

¹⁵ *The Sacred Name Broadcaster*, April 2001 edition, pp. 16-17; published by the Assemblies of Yahweh, Bethel PA 19507.

¹⁶ TDTN-RLS, p. 18

The fact that John first calls this day the Sabbath day, *twice*, argues for this day being the regular weekly Sabbath. This day is then described as being a high day as well. I was rebuked once in front of a large congregation of people because of my interpretation of this passage, by someone who told me “Can’t you see what the passage plainly says!” However, no rebuttal or proof was given on his part in objection to my statements.

John then mentions this preparation day once again when he says, “There laid they Yeshua therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand.” (John 19:42) This was the day of preparing for the previously mentioned Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath that was a high day.

Now, before bringing up this next bit of information, I must make it very clear that I have already established that the term preparation, when used in conjunction with the term Sabbath, has the primary meaning of food preparation. Thus, when this technical term is used in this fashion, we can be sure that it means the sixth day of the week. I should also mention the Jewish historian, Josephus, in regards to this word preparation, seeing he uses it in his writings in reference to the day before the weekly Sabbath. Josephus tells us of an edict given by Emperor Augustus in the Jews’ favor which stated:

That no one shall be obliged to give bail or surety on the Sabbath day, nor on the preparation before it, after the ninth hour.¹⁷

This gives us an understanding of what the word preparation meant in the Jewish frame of mind, back in the first century A.D.

The word preparation is also used in conjunction with the term Passover in the book of John 19:14; John says that the day of the Messiah’s crucifixion was “The preparation of the Passover.” The word Passover here would have to refer to the entire feast, beginning on the 15th day of Aviv, thus making the word preparation describing the 14th of Aviv. This in no way diminishes the fact of the weekly Sabbath being on the 15th, it simply shows us that this particular Sabbath was also the first day of Passover or Unleavened Bread.¹⁸ Thus the terms “Preparation of the Sabbath” and “Preparation of the Passover,” are agreeable. Both refer to the 14th day of Aviv. The phrase “Preparation of the Passover” is probably a reference to the slaying of the Passover lamb which took place on the 14th day of Aviv, between the evenings.¹⁹

However, the majority of scholars view the term preparation in John 19:14 as simply designating the sixth day of the week. They feel that the term *paraskene*, the Greek term for preparation, had such a technical designation that no other choice is plausible. It is also pointed out that John 19:14 has been misunderstood by the 72 hour proponents because of “The failure to recognize the technical usage of the term “Preparation,” as the name for Friday... (this) has caused some to misinterpret John’s phrase ‘it was the day of Preparation of the Passover...’ as meaning ‘the day of

¹⁷ Josephus, Antiquities 16-6-2

¹⁸ Give note to Luke 22:1.

¹⁹ I personally believe the Passover lamb is to be slain on the daylight portion of the 14th of Aviv, and eaten on the 15th of Aviv. I am, however, fully aware of the beginning of the 14th day arguments. I have about a 1 ½ inch thick book detailing such arguments, entitled *The Christian Passover*, by Fred R. Coulter.

Preparation *for* the Passover.”²⁰ These scholars reason that John 19:14 is to be understood as meaning that “It was the sixth day of the Passover.” i.e. the Preparation day that happened during the Passover Week. I *do* believe there is much merit to this interpretation of John 19:14.

Finally, John mentions that it was definitely on the first day of the week, when Mary Magdalene approached the sepulcher.²¹ This corresponds with the accounts of Mark and Luke, which also tell us that the women approached the tomb early in the morning on the first day of the week. This first day came immediately after the Sabbath, which in turn came after the day of the preparation. Thus, only one Sabbath occurred in this time frame.

Matthew’s Account

Matthew, although not mentioning it during the day of the crucifixion, calls the crucifixion day, the preparation day, in Matthew 27:62. “Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate.”

Some have made an attempt to say that because this day is called the *next day*, it may be evidence that the day was not a weekly Sabbath. However, I have shown that the other three evangels plainly call this *next day* the Sabbath day, that is, the weekly Sabbath. This is very plain and easy to see in many passages.

The calling of this day as *next day* therefore does not prove that it was not the weekly Sabbath day at all. Does the fact that Matthew does not call this *next day* the Passover, or the first day of the feast of unleavened bread also mean that it was not the first day of the feast? Matthew simply was inspired to write *next day*.

We must however take some time out to comment on the passage found in Matthew 28:1 which reads, “In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.” Most proponents of the 72 hour entombment believe that this verse proves that Yeshua had risen before the first day of the week began; thus, this was a Sabbath resurrection, not a first day resurrection. Seeing the Messiah was placed inside the tomb shortly before the Sabbath, 72 hours later would be shortly before the first day of the week.

Taking a Look at History

I personally believe that this interpretation, to some degree, stemmed from not wanting to accept *first day worship* as opposed to *Sabbath worship*. In other words, those promoting worship on the first day of the week, for the most part, declare that because Yeshua rose on the first day of the week, this is the day we are to now worship upon. For one to show that He did not rise on the first day of the week would destroy this argument of the first day worshiper.

Messianic individuals, for centuries, have believed that the Messiah rose on the first day of the week, and not the Sabbath. One does not have to “rewrite” history to

²⁰ TCR, p. 38

²¹ John 20:1 / John’s use of “while it was yet dark,” must, of necessity, harmonize with the other three accounts. A harmonization takes place when we understand that they all refer to a time in which the darkness and light connects.

prove Sabbath observance. The fact remains that the Bible just does not say that we are to worship (or rest) on the day of the resurrection. For someone to say this is nothing short of speculation. For someone to claim that the Messiah resurrected on the first day of the week does not mean he immediately becomes a Catholic, or that he is giving modern Christendom a pedestal for their teaching. It simply means that when we look for truth, we look to the Bible, instead of looking for a way to make Scripture fit our own personal theology.

I should point out here that of all the writers who spoke of the day of the resurrection in the first, second, and third centuries A.D., not a single writer records a Sabbath resurrection. There actually is not even a hint of a debate on the issue. Please notice the following:

But when the first day of the week dawned he arose from the dead, and fulfilled those things which before his passion he foretold to us...²²

On the day of the preparation... at the ninth hour he gave up the ghost; and before sunset he was buried. During the Sabbath he continued under the earth in the tomb... At the dawning of the Lord's Day he arose from the dead... The day of the preparation, then, comprises the passion; the Sabbath embraces the burial; the Lord's Day contains the resurrection²³

...For they crucified him (Messiah) on the day before that of Saturn, and on the day after, which is Sunday, He appeared to His Apostles and disciples...²⁴
The eighth day, that is, the first day after the Sabbath, was to be that on which the Lord should rise again...²⁵

You see what it means: it is not the present sabbaths that are acceptable to me, but the one that I have made, on which, having brought everything to rest, I will make the beginning of an eighth day, that is, the beginning of another world... This is why we also observe the eighth day with rejoicing, on which Jesus also arose from the dead, and having shown himself ascended to heaven...²⁶

I should also mention a group of Messianic individuals known by the name of the Nazarenes. This group existed in the first century A.D.,²⁷ and their existence can be dated by name up to the fourth century A.D. It should be noted that these Nazarenes most likely represent the original practice of believers in Yeshua of Nazareth. Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi refers us to the historian Epiphanius, to show that although there were some people degrading the Nazarenes for their beliefs, there was nothing heretical about them at all.

²² The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles / 2nd to 3rd century A.D. / Book 5, Section 3, Paragraph 14

²³ The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians / chapter 9 / Ignatius of Antioch / 50-107 A.D.

²⁴ The First Apology / chapter 67 / Justin Martyr – approximately 150 A.D.

²⁵ Cyprian of Carthage / Epistle 58, Section 4 / approximately 255 A.D.

²⁶ Apostolic Fathers / The Epistle of Barnabus / 130-138 A.D.

²⁷ We find a group by the name of Nazarenes in Acts 24:5

For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes
The man described as their ringleader was none other than the great Apostle Paul.

The Nazarenes do not differ in any essential thing from them [i.e. Jews], since they practice the custom and doctrines prescribed by the Jewish law, except that they believe in Christ. They believe in the resurrection of the dead and that the universe was created by God. They preach that God is one and that Jesus Christ is his Son. They are very learned in the Hebrew language. They read the law... Therefore they differ both from the Jews and from the Christians; from the former, because they believe in Christ; from the true Christians because they fulfill till now the Jewish rites as the circumcision, the Sabbath and others.²⁸

Although Epiphanius here attempts to discredit the Nazarenes for their “heretical” teachings, he does not even give a hint that this group taught a “Sabbath resurrection.” Thus, although strict Sabbath keepers, nothing is ever mentioned of their promoting a “Sabbath resurrection” while denouncing a first-day resurrection. This is yet further proof that in the early centuries A.D., no one believed in a “Sabbath resurrection.”²⁹

On this same note, Samuele Bacchiocchi writes that, “The constant influx of converts from the synagogue may well have contributed to maintain a constant admiration toward Jewish rites like the Sabbath. Numerous Eastern Fathers, in fact, fought constantly against the Sabbath which many Christians observed in addition to Sunday.”³⁰ Mr. Bacchiocchi then, in a footnote attributed to the above quote, tells us of the following:

Palladius (ca. A.D. 365-425), in his history of early monasticism, known as *Lausiac History*, refers repeatedly to the observance of both Sabbath and Sunday...³¹

It seems that there were at least some people back in the early centuries A.D., who, although recognizing the Sabbath as a holy day, also recognized the first day of the week as the day of the resurrection. There is no record of them coming with a rebuttal that the Messiah did not resurrect on the first day of the week.

I am well aware of some of the other doctrinal statements made by these “early church fathers” I gave attention to previously. However, just because they may not have held sound doctrine in all areas, does not diminish from the fact that they did not even so much as hint that there were those believing Yeshua rose on the Sabbath. Why? Could it be because He *did not* rise on the Sabbath? The fact that there is not

²⁸ FSTS, pg. 157, quoting Epiphanius in *Adversus haereses* 29, 7 / pp. 41,402.

²⁹ The Historian Eusebius also informs us of another sect known by the title Ebionites. He states on p. 93 of *EEH*,

They [Ebionites] also observed the Sabbath and other discipline of the Jews just like them, but on the other hand, they also celebrated the Lord's days very much like us in commemoration of his resurrection.

I must note that a certain class of Ebionites rejected the virgin birth of the Messiah, however, Origen (according to the Catholic Encyclopedia; www.knight.org/advent/cathen/05242c.htm) notes a distinction between two classes of Ebionites. He mentions the ones which accepted the virgin birth of the Messiah, also celebrated the first day as a memorial of His resurrection. If they attempted to teach a “Sabbath Resurrection,” why is there no rebuttal from Eusebius or any others promoting a first day resurrection?

³⁰ FSTS, p. 217

³¹ FSTS, p. 218

one single historical writer in the first three centuries A.D. who held to a Sabbath resurrection is evidence against a 72 hour entombment of the Messiah. As Charles Wesley Ewing states in his article pertaining to this subject:

It is a historical fact that for the first eighteen centuries of the Christian era, from the times of the Apostles until the nineteenth century, Christians have universally regarded Friday as the day of the crucifixion. This fact alone must be explained by the 72 hour advocates. *Within the last one hundred years* writers have begun to advance the new theory of a Wednesday crucifixion. Why is it that for more than eighteen centuries a Friday crucifixion has been accepted without question? ³²

Thus, the issue began much later in time, coming somewhat from men who looked for a way to disprove the first day worshiper's claim. Once again, must we rewrite history so as to prove Sabbath observance?³³ The day of the Messiah's resurrection hasn't a thing to do with the day of our worship. We worship on the day Yahweh blessed at the beginning of time.

What About Matthew 28:1?

I can now hear someone saying, "Matthew 28:1 is the oldest history we have, and it says, 'In the end of the Sabbath!'" I do agree with the logic behind this statement. To me, one's final authority should be Scripture, not history. Yahweh very well could have placed certain historical documents at our fingertips, to see whether we will believe Him or the uninspired documents. I personally feel more comfortable in my walk with Yahweh when I have the backing of Scripture, even though history sometimes states contrary assertions.

While I definitely cannot argue that the Bible doesn't say this in Matthew 28:1, we should ask ourselves does this absolutely teach that Yeshua rose on the Sabbath? We must say that if it does teach this, and the women here in Matthew's account did come to the tomb in the end of the Sabbath, a few things need to be considered.

If the visit to the tomb in Matthew was at the end of the Sabbath, then why do all the other gospels (recording the same account) place the visit on the first day of the week? (Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1, John 20:1)

According to Mark 16:3, the women were not aware that the stone was rolled away. If they had visited the previous evening they would have definitely known.

Luke 24:1 teaches us that spices were brought early in the morning on the first day of the week. Why would they bring spices if they had visited the previous evening and had been told that the Messiah was not there for He had risen? (Matthew 28:6)

³² WJCFW, p. 3

³³ Samuele Bacchiocchi, in TCR, p. 44 states the following:

The absence of any early Christian polemic regarding the day of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection, offers, in our view, an overwhelming proof of the trustworthiness of the traditional chronology of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. If indeed Christ had risen on a Saturday afternoon, seventh day Sabbath keepers would have capitalized on this fact to discredit the Resurrection argument frequently used in early Christianity to defend Sunday keeping. Such an argument, however, never appears in the polemic over the theological superiority of the two days.

According to Matthew 28:7-8, the women were instructed to go and tell the disciples the good news. If this was in the ending portion of the Sabbath, why did the disciples wait nonchalantly all night before coming to the tomb? The fact is, they were in a hurry to get there after they had been told the news on the first day of the week (John 20:2-4).

What then, is the true understanding of Matthew 28:1? The *King James Study Bible*, published by Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988, page 1,486 states the following:

The empty tomb was found in the end [Gr. *opse*, used as improper preposition for “after”] of the Sabbath, agreeing with the other evangelists.

The author of this footnote obviously sees that Matthew’s use of “in the end of,” must of necessity mean “after.” Some have said that “after” is not a legitimate translation of the Greek word *opse*. I believe *opse* could be rendered as after, but is there another explanation?

At this time I would like to point out that in the Greek texts of the New Testament there are no punctuation marks, and the words run directly together one after another. Not only is this the case, but in many texts, only capitalized letters are used. The following fragment from an early epistle of Peter illustrates this beautifully.



A papyrus copy of Peter’s epistles, P⁷², from about A.D. 200.

This makes it quite a job for the translators of these Greek texts. Not only do they have to translate from Greek to English, but they also must attempt to discern where thoughts end and begin, as well as decide what the proper punctuation is for each group of words. While I am not about to accuse the translators here of some “rotten conspiracy,” I will say that I believe the text of Matthew 27:66 – Matthew 28:1 can be separated in a more appropriate way.

Illustrating what the Greek text would look like in English will now be done. I will use Matthew 27:66-Matthew 28:1.

SOTHEYWENTANDMADETHESEPULCHERSURESEALINGTHESTONEAND
NDSETTINGAWATCHINTHEENDOFTHESSABBATHASITBEGANTODAWN
NTOWARDSSTHEFIRSTDAYOFTHEWEEKCAMEMARYMAGDELENEAND
THEOTHERMARYTOSEETHESEPULCHER

As you can see, this is very confusing, and this isn’t even in Greek! Now we will separate the apparent words and take away the capitalization.

The Sign of Jonah -- 20

so they went and made the sepulcher sure sealing the stone and setting a watch in the end of the sabbath as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week came mary magdalene and the other mary to see the sepulcher

Now, is there another possible way to split up the text, instead of using the traditional split-up of the King James Version?

So they went and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone and setting the watch in the end of the Sabbath. As it began to dawn towards the first day of the week came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.

Did you notice the difference? Instead of the two Mary's coming to the tomb in the end of the Sabbath, we have the watch set in the end of the Sabbath. This allows Matthew to harmonize with what everything else the New Testament teaches. Therefore, Matthew 28:1 does not give credence to a Sabbath resurrection at all. We simply need to move the mark of a period and the puzzle fits together with perfection. In actuality we are really moving nothing, the fact remains that the period was non-existent in the Greek manuscript.³⁴

I might also add that for those who give credence to the *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, (translated by George Howard, Professor of Religion), it too, acknowledges the women coming to the tomb, not on the Sabbath, but rather the first day of the week.

So they completed the structure of the tomb, sealed it, and placed a guard there. On the first day of the week, early in the morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. [Matthew 27:66 - Matthew 28:1]

After presenting this information about the separation of the text at a conference I attended, I was faced with a question regarding another possible separation in the text, which on face value seemed to lend credence to the 72 hour theory. The key verse brought to my attention was Matthew 27:62, a passage which states the following in the King James Version of the Bible.

Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate.

The understanding of this verse is that the next day was the 15th of Aviv. This is seen by examining Matthew 27:57-61 which all speak of the day of the Messiah's burial, the 14th of Aviv. Thus it was on the 15th day of Aviv when the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate. This shows their true feelings in regards to Yahweh's Sabbath.

However, one man attempted to show me that the text could very well be split up in this fashion:

³⁴ By making this claim, I am not advocating that we now go to the Bible and start moving every period we see! I am simply stating that some separations in the text, as we have it in the KJV and other translations, are not the best possible separations. For example, Genesis 2:4 would have made more sense as Genesis 2:1.

Now the next day that followed, the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate.

What this man has attempted to show is that the next day that followed was the preparation day to the weekly Sabbath. The reason this cannot be accurate is because the next day that followed the day of the burial of the Messiah would be the 15th not the 16th. According to the 72 hour proponents, the 17th was a Sabbath and the 16th was the preparation of that Sabbath. Nevertheless, the next day that followed the 14th would have to be the 15th not the 16th. This is simply an oversight by some 72 hour proponents.

We now have Matthew's account mentioning the preparation day (Matthew 27:62), the Sabbath (Matthew 27:66), and the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1). Notice also, that in splitting up the text in this fashion, Matthew not only calls the day after the preparation the "next day," (Matthew 27:62) but also calls this same next day, the Sabbath in verse 66. Analyzing the four gospel accounts, shows that Matthew 12:40 is to either be understood as meaning parts of three days, or that the phrase *heart of the earth* does not merely connote the grave.

Chapter 3

THE 17TH OF AVIV

THOSE HOLDING TO a 72 hour entombment believe that a “high day Sabbath” took place on the 15th of Aviv, while a weekly Sabbath fell on the 17th of Aviv. A question not often asked is, “Could the 17th of Aviv be a weekly Sabbath?” I should point out the fact that if the 17th of Aviv was a weekly Sabbath, then the 10th of Aviv would also have to be a weekly Sabbath. This is proven by simply doing the math ($10 + 7 = 17$ & $17 - 7 = 10$). So, we will ask the question: was the 10th of Aviv a weekly Sabbath? Let us examine some passages akin to the question.

In John 12:1 we read the following concerning the Messiah’s entrance to Bethany, “Then Yeshua, six days before the Passover came to Bethany.” I should point out that when John references us to the Passover, he speaks of the 15th of Aviv. We see this to be the case in a passage looked at earlier, written also by John: “And it was the preparation of the Passover.”³⁵ This verse describes the day of the crucifixion as the preparation of the Passover. This day had to be the 14th. Thus, just as the preparation for the Sabbath is the day before the Sabbath, the preparation of the Passover is the day before the Passover.³⁶ Luke 22:1 also shows us that in New Testament times, the days of unleavened bread were referred to as the Passover, “Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.”

I do realize that the 14th day of Aviv can be called the Passover, and is many times throughout the Scriptures. However, we see that John (very clearly in John 19:14) refers to the feast of unleavened bread as the Passover, and Luke does exactly the same. It therefore stands to reason that in John 12:1, six days before the Passover, has the meaning of six days before the 15th of Aviv.³⁷

³⁵ John 19:14; John 18:28 also uses the Passover in reference to the 15th.

³⁶ You may also refer back to the section entitled John’s Account (p. 22) for explanation of John 19:14.

³⁷ If one chooses to stand on the case of the 14th being referred to here as the Passover (which I do not believe is likely), we may find that six days before the Passover is the 8th of Aviv. Then the following night (John 12:2 / 9th) supper was made for the Messiah. On the next day, the 10th of Aviv (John 12:12), the Messiah came to Jerusalem. Some scholars have promoted this chronology. I, however, lean toward there simply being two days involved instead of three. There are however at least two ministers I am aware of who place the date of John 12:1 to the 9th of Aviv, and John 12:12 to the 10th of Aviv. Please notice the following. Jacob O. Meyer states in the April 2001 edition of the *Sacred Name Broadcaster*, published by the Assemblies of Yahweh, Bethel PA 19507, p. 5,

“We may then readily conclude that Yahshua the Messiah was selected by Israel as their Passover lamb when they cried Hoshiana, at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the tenth day of Abib.”

John A. Pinkston states basically the same in his book, *God’s Annual Holy Days, for Christians*, published by the Congregation of God Seventh Day, P.O. Box 2345, Kennesaw GA 30144-1994, 2nd edition 1998, pp. 13-14,

The lamb was symbolic of Jesus Christ... just as the lamb was presented to the family, so was Jesus Christ presented to Jerusalem on the 10th day of the first month... To prove that Jesus Christ was set aside and presented to the people on the 10th day of the first month, just as the lamb was set aside on the 10th day, we read in

Six days before the 15th would of a surety be the 9th of Aviv. What is the significance of all this? Well, in John 12:12 we read that “On the next day (10th) much people that were come to the feast when they heard that Yeshua was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him.” We find the same account written in Matthew 21:8 where we read that, “A very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way.”

If the 10th of Aviv was a weekly Sabbath, what are the people doing cutting branches from trees? We should also wonder why buying and selling was going on during that day as well (Matthew 21:12). Furthermore, Yeshua also healed the blind and lame that came to him (Matthew 21:14). Why no rebuke from the Jewish leaders for breaking their Sabbath traditions? Wouldn't they have rebuked Yeshua for healing on the Sabbath, as they did at other times? I can agree with Mr. Harold W. Hoehner on this point:

Since Jesus was riding on an animal, He would have been breaking the Mosaic Law which states that even animals were not to work on the Sabbath (Deut. 5:14)... Since the people were cutting down branches from trees (Matt. 21:8; Mark 11:8), they would have also violated the Law (cf. Deut. 5:14; Num. 15:32-36)... Certainly if Jesus had violated the Sabbath and caused others to do so, it seems that His enemies would have mentioned something of this during the Passion Week.³⁸

I would also like to look a little closer at the belief that teaches six days before the Passover is the eighth day of the month and not the ninth. There are some students of the Bible which have stated my calculations are incorrect, reasoning that the Passover referred in John is speaking of the 14th day of Aviv, and not the 15th. I do believe that the word Passover does at times refer to the 14th day of Aviv in Scripture, however I feel I have adequately shown that in John's epistle, he uses the term Passover in reference to the 15th day of Aviv.

Let's, however, give this belief the upper hand. Let's say six days before the Passover was the 8th of Aviv, and the following day (9th) Yeshua rode into the streets of Jerusalem on a donkey. With this belief system, here are a few things to consider:

1. According to this calculation, the Messiah would not have as accurately fulfilled the timing of the Passover lamb. The lambs were to be put or penned up on the 10th of Aviv (Exodus 12:3), not the 9th.
2. If Yeshua road into Jerusalem on the 9th, do we know what happened on the next day, i.e. the 10th? Mark's account (Mark 11:1-20) seems to indicate that the temple was entered by Yeshua two days in a row. Yeshua enters into the temple on the 9th, and then the next day (Mark 11:12-18). He enters the temple again; on the 10th.

John 12:1, 'Then Jesus SIX DAYS BEFORE THE PASSOVER came to Bethany...'
Remember, the Passover day was the 15th day of the first month; therefore six days prior to the Passover would have placed this on the ninth day of the first month.
(John 12:2) 'On the next day (10th day of the first month) much people heard that Jesus was coming to the feast...'

Both of these ministers believe in the 72 hour theory, which is impossible, as proven in this section of this treatise. I do not mention their names for degradation, just to make a point.

³⁸ CALC, pg. 67

The 17th of Aviv -- 25

Thus buying and selling would have been done on both the 9th and the 10th, or more likely and accurately, on the 10th and the 11th.

All of the evidence points towards this 10th of Aviv being an ordinary working day and not a weekly Sabbath day. Therefore the 17th was not a weekly Sabbath day, and Yeshua could not have been in the grave for 72 hours. Thus, either Matthew 12:40 is to be understood as meaning parts of three days, or the phrase *heart of the earth* does not merely connote the grave.

Chapter 3

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

ALTHOUGH THE PASSAGE concerning the Messiah's walk on the road to Emmaus is attempted to be explained by those holding to a 72 hour entombment, I feel they do not do justice to the verses.

The Messiah walked along a road which went to a town called Emmaus after His resurrection took place. Two men walked with Him, but had no idea who exactly they were walking with. They, speaking about the events that had just transpired, received a question from Yeshua.

And he said unto them, what manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, what things? And they said unto him, Concerning Yeshua of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. (Luke 24:17-21)

What is the significance of these verses? The significance is that the third day since the crucifixion would be the sixth day of the week, the preparation for the weekly Sabbath.

If the Messiah was crucified on the 14th, but did not resurrect until the end of the 17th (Sabbath?) making the 18th the first day of the week, the men would have told the Messiah, "Today is the fifth day since these things were done."

The most common explanation of these verses, by the 72 hour proponents, is that the turn of phrase *these things* (Luke 24:21), includes the sealing of the tomb. However, this claim cannot be substantiated. The term, "third day" or "three days" is used at least 13 times³⁹ in the Gospels and New Testament Epistles, when in reference to the Messiah. In each instance, the count of three days begins with the death of Yeshua, *not* the sealing of the tomb. One wonders why we never hear the Messiah say that He will be delivered over into the hands of men, be crucified, and then the tomb sealed and the third day rise again. The closest antecedent to the phrase *these things* in Luke 24:21 is the word crucified. In other words, it was the third day since the crucifixion, *not* the sealing of the tomb.

I do not ask that we take the words of Cleopas (in Luke 24) literally, while taking the words of Yeshua parabolically. I believe both Cleopas and Yeshua are to be understood as using the method which all Jews of the first century acknowledged, *inclusive reckoning*.

Upon revealing the true implication of this passage, it has been said by others, that those using this method of counting days are in fact in error, but why? They reason that three days SINCE the crucifixion would bring us to the 17th of Abib, not the 16th.

³⁹ Mt. 16:21, Mt. 17:23, Mt. 20:18-19, Mt. 27:63-64, Mk. 9:31, Mk. 10:34, Lk. 9:22, Lk. 13:32, Lk. 18:33, Lk. 24:7, Jn. 2:19-21, Ac. 10:39-40, I Cor. 15:3-4.

One day SINCE the 14th would be the 15th, two days SINCE the 14th would be the 16th, and three days SINCE the 14th would be the 17th. Therefore, those opposing the 72 hour view are totally inaccurate, right?

This reminds me of how some have promoted a Monday Pentecost. I have read Pentecost calculations which state that because Yahweh commands the count to Pentecost to begin "From the morrow after the Sabbath"⁴⁰ the count actually begins on a Monday or the second day of the week. They reason that the morrow after the Sabbath is Sunday, and one day FROM Sunday is Monday. Thus, when one begins to number at Monday, one ends up with a Monday Pentecost.

This method of counting ignores what is known as an inclusive counting method. As mentioned previously in the third day passages, day one is counted, regardless of how much time remains in the day. To count otherwise would ignore the first day. One writer commented on this rebuttal in saying,

If a minister told his congregation: "I have been working on this message *since* Wednesday," would any suppose he did not start until Thursday? His statement would *include* Wednesday.⁴¹

Those holding to a 72 hour position have to say something in regards to this verse. However, to make this rebuttal and then state that *these things* refers also to the sealing of the tomb, is something that I do not feel is Scriptural at this present time.

⁴⁰ Leviticus 23:15

⁴¹ TDTN-RLS, p. 37

Chapter 4

THE WAVE SHEAF OFFERING

UPON UNDERSTANDING THAT the festivals of Yahweh are a shadow of things to come,⁴² many have understood that at least some of the festivals foreshadowed events taking place at the first advent of Yeshua. Many have made a connection with the Passover lamb, and the Messiah our Passover⁴³ as well as between the offering of the first-fruits of the barley harvest, and the Apostle Paul's use of the word firstfruits in reference to Yeshua. That the Messiah is called the firstfruits can be found in the book of First Corinthians 15:20, 23.

But now is the Messiah risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept... For as in Adam all die, even so in the Messiah shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: the Messiah the firstfruits; afterward they that are the Messiah's at his coming.

Seeing that Yeshua was identified here as the firstfruits, one can make an obvious parallel with the waving of the firstfruits by the priest in Leviticus 23:11.

Without going into a lengthy discussion on what day the firstfruits were exactly waved, I will simply say that I believe this event took place every year on the 16th of Aviv, even during the time of the Messiah. Both Jewish historians, Philo⁴⁴ and Josephus,⁴⁵ show record that the Jewish people of their day observed the firstfruit offering on the 16th day of the first month, Philo writing before 70 A.D. and Josephus writing after 70 A.D. There is no reason to doubt that each writer was simply revealing the reckoning of the Jewish people of that time. This however is not fully conclusive, so I might add that the Greek Septuagint, (dating to approximately 250 B.C.), the Scriptural text used and quoted from the majority of the time by first century believers, renders Leviticus 23: 10-11 as follows:

Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them, When ye shall enter into the land which I give you, and reap the harvest of it, then shall ye bring a sheaf, the firstfruits of your harvest, to the priest; and he shall lift up the sheaf before Yahweh, to be accepted for you. On the morrow of the first day the priest shall lift it up.

The first day here is obviously a reference to the 15th, the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. Thus the morrow of the first day would be the 16th. Realizing the 16th to be the *wave sheaf day*, it stands to reason that this day would be the day of the resurrection, and not the 17th.

⁴² Colossians 2:17

⁴³ First Corinthians 5:7

⁴⁴ Philo in The Special Laws II, XXIX. (162) states that:

There is also a festival on the day of the paschal feast, (Passover) which succeeds the first day, and this is named the sheaf, from what takes place on it...

⁴⁵ Josephus in Antiquities of the Jews, Book 3, Chapter 10, Section 5, (250) states:

But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them.

However, one might say that the 144,000 are also called by the name of the "firstfruits" in Revelation 14:4, and as a matter of fact, they are.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

So, both the Messiah and the 144,000 are called the firstfruits. Is this evidence that we cannot make an association between the day of the wave sheaf and the Messiah's resurrection? No, it is not.

First Corinthians 15:3-4 gives us the reason why Yeshua's anti-type of the firstfruits is a parallel with Leviticus 23:11.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that the Messiah died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

When we understand the 14th of Aviv to be day one, (the day of slaying the Passover), the 15th of Aviv to be day two, (the first day of unleavened bread), and the 16th of Aviv as day three, (the waving of the first-fruits), we then have a Scripture to go to which states the third day resurrection. In an easier form to understand you have:

- Passover: The Messiah was crucified as the Passover on the 14th of Aviv
- First Day of Unleavened Bread: The annual holyday, (and weekly Sabbath in crucifixion week) on the 15th of Aviv
- Waving of the Firstfruits: The Messiah; the firstfruits, resurrects on the 16th of Aviv

If one does not see this method, where do you suggest we go to in the Bible to see a third day resurrection of the Messiah (firstfruits)? There is no place to go in the Scriptures, *unless* you see a 14th, 15th, and 16th sequence of events. You must have a place in the Scriptures to go to, per First Corinthians 15:3-4, and Luke 24:45-46.

Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said unto them. Thus it is written, that the Messiah should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day...

I might add that who's to say the 144,000 will not be reaped by the sickle of the Son of man on the 16th of Aviv, seeing they are also called the firstfruits. I am not demanding such an interpretation, as Scripture does not make this clear. However, Scripture does make it clear that not only is Yeshua called the firstfruits, but He also rose the third day, according to the Scriptures. This once again is further evidence that the Messiah was not in the grave for 72 hours.

Chapter 5

DANIEL'S PROPHECY

ALTHOUGH I'VE NOT heard of this argument as much as some of the others made by the 72 hour proponents, I should briefly mention a prophecy some use from the book of Daniel. It has been said that Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah, states that the Messiah will be cut off (which they reason means crucified), in the midst of the week. Seeing that the fourth day of the week is in the middle of the week, and the sixth day is towards the end, a fourth day, (Wednesday, in their estimation), crucifixion fits much better.

However, something has been overlooked in Daniel. Now, I'm not about to get into the details of Daniel's prophecy, or the interpretation of the 70th week, but I will make mention that the weeks spoken of in the book of Daniel are weeks of years, and not weeks of days. Notice the statements made by this study guide.

The prophecy of the seventy weeks is crucial for understanding biblical prophecy. Every statement in verses 24-27 is important and deserves special attention. The first interpretive problem is the meaning of the expression seventy weeks. The word weeks is a Hebrew word *shabua* that can refer to any period of seven: seven days, seven months, seven years, and so on. There are four good reasons for believing that the seven intended here is a period of seven years: (1) Daniel has just been concerned about years (vv. 1, 2). (2) It is impossible to fit the events of verses 24-27 into 490 days or weeks. (3) In the only other place where Daniel uses the word *week* he qualifies it by adding the word *days* (10:2, 3). (4) Finally, the fact that verse 27 speaks of a covenant being broken at the half-way point of the seventieth seven agrees well with Daniel 7:25, 12:7, and Revelation 12:14, which speak of three and one half years as one half of a week.⁴⁶

Although I believe each point could be capitalized on, I will deal with point two. Most everyone to my knowledge agrees that Daniel 9:25 refers to a time period from the commandment of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah to restore the city of Jerusalem, up to some time of the first advent of the Messiah. Verse 25 also tells us that "seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks" is the time between these two occurrences. This is 69 weeks. Taking it as literal weeks would give us only 483 days! This would definitely not fit the time frame between the two events. It fits much better when we understand the 69 weeks to be weeks of years, i.e. 69 periods of seven years apiece. This would be 483 years. The 70th week would then be the last seven year period, making up a total of 490 years.

Thus, even if the passage states that Yeshua would be cut off or crucified in the midst of the week, (which I'm not sure on,) it is speaking of the middle of a week of years, not a literal week. The middle of a week of years, (7 years) would be 3 ½ years. To try to make the passage speak of a literal week as well, would be an invalid and forced interpretation, seeing that this is not stated anywhere in Scripture. This prophecy falls short from proving anything regarding a 72 hour entombment of Yeshua of Nazareth.

⁴⁶ *The King James Study Bible* / Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville / 1988 by Liberty University / pp. 1,288-89.

Chapter 6

UNDERSTANDING MATTHEW 12:40

THIS BOOKLET WOULD not be sufficient without an examination of the Messiah's words, "three days and three nights" in Matthew 12:40. As we endeavor to understand just exactly what this passage tells us, do not lose sight at everything dealt with thus far. With the evidence presented I, at one time in my study, was left to conclude that Matthew 12:40 was to be understood as meaning parts of three days, or either the phrase *heart of the earth* did not merely connote the grave.

Selective Scholarship

Most 72 hour proponents I have come into contact with, are quick to show forth portions of an index found in what is known as *The Companion Bible*.⁴⁷ The index portions of this Bible are capitalized upon by those seeking scholarly support for a 72 hour position, and rightfully so! Many times, the linguistic understanding of scholars can benefit our limited understanding of how certain terms were used in ancient times. *The Companion Bible* is such a reference upholding the 72 hour belief.⁴⁸

On page 170 of the index portion of the Bible we find index #144 entitled, "THE THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS OF MATT. 12:40". The author of this index states the following:

The fact that "three days" is used by Hebrew idiom for any part of three days and three nights is not disputed; because that was the common way of reckoning, just as it was when used of years. Three or any number of years was used inclusively of any part of those years, as may be seen in the reckoning of the reigns of any of the kings of Israel and Judah. But, when the number of "nights" is stated as well as the number of "days", then the expression ceases to be an idiom, and becomes a literal statement of fact.

As I stated at the beginning of this treatise, I do not ridicule or condemn anyone for believing in a 72 hour theory (sometimes termed a Wednesday crucifixion). However, when speaking to the 72 hour proponents, this commentary by the Companion Bible is the only source one usually hears. Are there any other scholarly comments about Matthew 12:40? If so, do *they* believe the Bible teaches that 72 hours had to expire before the Messiah resurrected? To answer the first question, yes there are. To answer the second question, no they do not.

Take for instance what commentator Adam Clarke had to say concerning this passage. Although rather lengthy, I believe it is quite essential to our discussion.

Our Lord rose from the grave on the day but one after his crucifixion: so that, in the computation in this verse, the part of the day on which he was crucified, and the part of that on which he rose again, are severally estimated as an entire day; and this, no

⁴⁷ The Companion Bible I have was published in 1990 by Kregel Publications, a division of Kregel Inc. out of Grand Rapids Michigan. I believe the index portions were compiled by a late scholar by the name of E.W. Bullinger.

⁴⁸ For anyone wishing to consult another scholarly support for the 72 hour belief, you should obtain, *A Guide to the Gospels* / London, 1948 / pp. 569-577, by W. Graham Scroggie.

doubt, exactly corresponded to the time in which Jonah was in the belly of the fish. Our Lord says, As Jonah was, so shall the Son of man be, etc. Evening and morning, or night and day, is the Hebrew phrase for a natural day, which the Greeks termed... nuchthemeron... For farther satisfaction... take the following from Lightfoot... If you number the hours that pass from our Savior's giving up the ghost upon the cross to his resurrection, you shall find almost the same number of hours [Note / 36 hrs.] ; and yet that space is called by him three days and three nights, whereas two nights only came between, and one complete day. Nevertheless, while he speaks these words, he is not without the consent both of the Jewish schools and their computation. Weigh well that which is disputed in the tract Shabbath, concerning the separation of a woman for three days; where many things are discussed by the Gemarists, concerning the computation of this space of three days. Among other things these words occur: R. Ismael saith, Sometimes it contains four onoth, sometimes five, sometimes six. But how much is the space of an onah? R. Jochanan saith, Either a day or a night. And so also the Jerusalem Talmud: 'R. Akiba fixed a DAY for an onah, and a NIGHT for an onah.' But the tradition is, that R. Eliazar ben Azariah said, A day and a night make an onah; and a PART of an onah is as the WHOLE. And a little after, R. Ismael computed a part of the onah for the whole." Thus, then, three days and three nights, according to this Jewish method of reckoning, included any part of the first day; the whole of the following night; the next day and its night; and any part of the succeeding or third day.⁴⁹

As you can see, Mr. Adam Clarke obviously understood the Jewish method of inclusive reckoning. Any part of an *onah* was as a whole. In other words, to the Jews of the first century, any part of a day was as a day; even if it only included a small portion of a night or a small portion of a day.

We should not stop here though with scholarly support. The book, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, has somewhat to offer as well.

First, we may be assuming that first-century Jews thought about time in the same way that we do. In fact they did not. Any part of a day could be counted as if it were a full day, much as in Canada and the U.S.A. a child is deductible for income-tax purposes at the full year rate even if he or she was born at 11 p.m. on December 31. The "three days and three nights," then, may simply refer to three twenty-four-hour days (sunset to sunset periods), and Jesus was in fact in the tomb parts of three different days. Second, we may be assuming that Jesus was simply making a statement, when, given the unusual nature of this phrase, he was actually quoting Jonah... In quoting the scriptural phrase Jesus probably did not mean that he would be buried the exact length of time as Jonah was in the fish, but that he would like Jonah be "buried" for that approximate time and then be "raised." The phrase is used to remind the hearers of the familiar Scripture. This is much like a modern person saying, "I laid a 'fleece' before God." They do not mean to indicate that they put out wool before God, but that, like Gideon in the Bible, they asked God for a particular sign to see if something was or was not his will. Thus, when he wants to remind people of Jonah, Jesus uses the phrase found there, but when he is not citing Jonah and simply intends to describe how long he would be in the tomb, he uses the more accurate "on the third day."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ ACCNT

⁵⁰ HSB

Do learned men (scholars) such as Walter C. Kaiser Jr., and F.F. Bruce (authors of the above paragraph), really not believe Yeshua's words? Or are they attempting to harmonize them with the rest of the New Testament? What about Harold W. Hoehner in his *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*. Is he an advocate of the 72 hour belief?

When one examines all the evidence, it seems that the New Testament, the Old Testament, and Rabbinic literature all agree that a part of a day is counted as a whole day-and-night. Thus, the expressions: "the three days and three nights," "after three days," and "on the third day" are all one and the same time span. These all support the fact that Christ was crucified on Friday and was resurrected on Sunday.⁵¹

I could go on and on quoting Albert Barnes in *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, or A.T. Robertson in his *Harmony of the Gospels*. Even Samuele Bacchiocchi, authored a book entitled *The Time of the Crucifixion and Resurrection*, advocating a sixth day crucifixion and a first day resurrection. Ultimately, our choice should have the backing of Scripture, however, these scholars and their logical comments seem to be ignored by those holding to a 72 hour entombment. Why do most proponents of a 72 hour entombment ignore the learned scholarship that holds to their opposing side?

After Three Days

One particular verse in the Bible uses the phrase *after three days* in reference to the resurrection of the Messiah. It can be found in Matthew 27:62, just after the chief priests and Pharisees approached Pilate.

Saying Sir, we remember that the deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again.

One begins to wonder, "How could the Messiah rise on the third day, and after three days?" Although this passage has been interpreted by those holding to a 72 hour theory, the Bible actually interprets it for us. How did those in Bible times understand the phrase *after three days*? Better yet, how did the chief priests and Pharisees understand the term? They were the very ones who made the statement in Matthew 27:62. The very next verse gives us the answer. (Matthew 27:63) "Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest the disciples come by night, and steal him away." In other words, sometime during the third day they would unsecure the sepulcher. *After three days* of necessity means after the third day *begins*, and not after the third day ends. Until the third day, in this context, has the meaning of sometime during the third day. For anyone wishing to find further evidence of this particular method of reckoning time, I ask you to examine this text: Second Chronicles 10:5-10.

Twelve Hours in a Day

While conversing with a very nice gentlemen on the phone once, I remarked to him that the Messiah's statement in Matthew 12:40 was to possibly be understood in light

⁵¹ CALC, p. 74

of the inclusive counting method. Seeing that part of a 24 hour day is as a whole day, preparation would be day one, the Sabbath day two, and finally the first day of the week as day three. “Yeah, but” he remarked, “the Messiah himself said that there were 12 hours in a day.”

While I absolutely see the point the man attempts to make here, I would ask you to see the point I am attempting to make. Sure, when speaking of the light portion of a day there are approximately twelve hours involved. However, can the night time portion be referred to as a day? I have a booklet in my library that is written by a man believing that the Sabbath is from dawn to dusk.⁵² Seeing that Yahweh defines light as day in Genesis, and then darkness as night, he reasons that the seventh day, must of necessity be only the seventh light. I am sure you are able to see his reasoning here too, but accepting it as literally as he does is another story, at least for me.

Technically, the light is the day, and the darkness is the night, but there is one passage of Scripture, (among many others) that completely destroys the premise that a day can only include the daylight hours. This passage is found in the book of Numbers 3:13, “On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed to myself all the firstborn in Israel.” The significance of this passage is that Yahweh defined the time frame of striking the first born in Egypt by the Hebrew word *yom*,⁵³ translated in English as day. This is the exact word used in Genesis describing day one, day two, day three, etc. However, after examining another passage, we see that Yahweh actually struck the firstborn at the time frame known as midnight. “And it came to pass that at midnight Yahweh smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 12:29) Exodus 11:4 also has Yahweh stating, “About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt.” With this information we can easily conclude that the Hebrew word *yom* or the English word *day* can involve the night time hours.

Yeshua said that there are twelve hours in a day, and he used the term in opposition to the word night. This however does not prove that the word night does not fall under the parameters of a broader definition of the word day. Part of a 24 hour day, whether only night or only day, can be used inclusively of an entire 24 hour day. This is a possible interpretation of the phrase in Matthew 12:40.

You Don't Believe the Messiah!

Upon making some of the aforementioned statements, I've in turn been accused of not believing the very words of the Messiah. It's said that those believing the way I do subvert, twist, and distort our Messiah's own words. Is this claim true, or is it one based on emotion?

I completely understand why those holding to a 72 hour entombment would make such a statement. Someone hearing that I do not believe what the Messiah said,

⁵² The booklet is entitled *The Scriptural Weekly Sabbath is not from Sunset to Sunset* / A publication of the International Congregation of Yahweh / P.O. Box 208, Pocahontas, Arkansas 72455/ Written by Gary C. Miller

⁵³ *Yom* is defined by Strong's Exhaustive Concordance as :

H3117 / *yome* / From an unused root meaning to *be hot*; a *day* (as the *warm* hours), whether literally (from sunrise to sunset, or from one sunset to the next), or figuratively (a space of time defined by an associated term), (often used adverbially).

would be shocked, startled, and baffled, to say the least. They would never even give me the “time of day” to explain my understanding of Scripture in regards to this subject, because right from the start, they think I’ve got some sort of “hidden agenda.”

This kind of reminds me of something I encountered when accepting the teaching of the Sacred Name, Yahweh, as the exclusive proper name of the Creator of the Universe. Along with this teaching also came the fact that I realized I could no longer call the Messiah by the name Jesus, seeing I could not find enough sufficient evidence which would lead me to believe that this was the best the translators could do. Because of my embracing such a belief, people began to think that I did not even believe in Jesus Christ anymore! “Did you hear that Matthew doesn’t even believe in Jesus?!” they would say. If they would have only come to me and asked, (as some did), they would have realized that it was not the Messiah that I’d rejected, not at all, only the common English name the majority of the Christian world refers to Him by.

My point is, that we sometimes, because of not being able to satisfactorily prove our accepted position (to ourselves), move into such “capsules” as these. Throwing stones at people, and attempting to discredit them, attacking the man instead of the message by saying things like, “They do not even believe what the Messiah said in Matthew 12:40. Can you believe that!?” I wholeheartedly want to believe the Messiah, and I do not doubt for one second that the 72 hour proponents do too.

Now, I should ask a question: Was the Messiah speaking plainly in Matthew 12:40, or could He possibly have been speaking figuratively? Does the fact that He often spoke in parables show forth evidence that it is at least a *possibility* of figurative speech in Matthew 12:40? Yes, it certainly is.

I will deal with the phrase *heart of the earth* a little later, but for now allow me to demonstrate that although sometimes sounding plain, the Messiah was indeed speaking in a figurative language. Proof in point, Luke 14:26. “If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

This word hate is used in Mark 13:13 in reference to believers being hated for the Messiah’s name sake. It is also used in Revelation 2:6 where the Messiah says that he hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Now, are we going to accuse one another for not believing what the Messiah plainly said in Luke 14:26? I should hope not. He was obviously speaking figuratively, to prove a point. What about John 6:27 when the Messiah said, “Labor not for the meat that perisheth.” Does this mean that we should not work for literal or material food? That’s what the passage plainly says isn’t it? Hopefully we all know better.

I do believe the Messiah in Matthew 12:40; however, my *understanding* of what He said may just not line up with everyone’s *interpretation* of what He said.

The Preaching of Jonah

A parallel passage to Matthew 12:40 can be found in Luke 11:29-30.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Matthew 16:4 also states:

A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

Reading further, we see that the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, but a greater prophet than Jonah was before their eyes now. As John Cordaro states in his article entitled *Three Days and Three Nights*:

A sign is something that is visible to the sign seeker. The Jews wanted a visible sign that was even more convincing than the miracles that Yahshua performed. The question is, "In what way was Jonah's journey in the fish's belly a sign to the Ninevites?" According to Jonah 2:10 – 3:3, after he was vomited out of the fish's mouth, he was to go to Nineveh. No one from Nineveh saw Jonah being spewed out of the fish, nor did he tell them of his encounter with it... Jonah himself, as a preacher of repentance sent from Yahweh was the sign...⁵⁵

I am not about to dismiss Matthew's use of the phrase *three days and three nights*, after all, it's in the Bible, however, Luke's parallel account shows that the emphasis of the sign is shown to be the message of repentance preached by both respective prophets. Both writers mention this fact, whereas only one includes a time element. Thus, although each prophet spent an amount of time in a certain place, the sign was actually the message of repentance preached; first by Jonah, and second, by Yeshua the Messiah.

Does Heart of the Earth = Grave?

Upon even attempting to ask this question, I will probably be approached again with a note of reference in the Companion Bible. You see, page 1,335 of this Bible in a footnote on the phrase *heart of the earth* states: "In the earth: i.e. the sepulcher, or tomb... It is the Fig. Pleonasm (a Hebraism)."

First of all, I should make mention that even this footnote from the Companion Bible suggests that the phrase *heart of the earth* is a figurative phrase, i.e. an idiom. Thus the Messiah definitely was speaking in an idiomatic fashion in Matthew 12:40. I think everyone would agree with this. Even the 72 hour proponents have to define the phrase at hand. Thus, why couldn't He also be speaking this way in His statements made immediately before the *heart of the earth* is mentioned? Think about it, both phrases are contained in one sentence, out of the same breath.

One thing to point out here is the fact that the passage in Matthew 12:40 mentions nothing about the crucifixion or the resurrection. Could these things be implied? Or could they be missing for a reason? Not only does the term *heart of the earth* sound like an idiom, but there is not any other place in the Bible using the term. As with certain other terms in the Bible we can do reference work, allowing the Bible to be its own interpreter and commentary. This is how I have many times solved puzzles to seemingly non-understandable passages in the Bible. It is, however, a fact

⁵⁵ *Three Days and Three Nights*, by John Cordaro. I can send this article to anyone who requests it.

that the Jewish people understood Jerusalem to be the center or “heart” of the earth.⁵⁶ This is spoken of by Ralph Woodrow in this way:

There is another explanation regarding the heart of the earth that better fits the requirements of the text. Within the Jewish world of Jesus’ day, JERUSALEM was considered the center or heart of the earth’s surface. Could it be that Jesus’ sign involved things he would experience in Jerusalem for three days and three nights?... Jerusalem was the center of the earth in that all peoples came from all directions to worship there (John 4:20; Acts 2:5-11; 8:27; etc.) When Jews were in a foreign land, they would pray “toward Jerusalem” (Dan. 6:10; II Chron. 6:34). Even Jonah inside the great fish, prayerfully looked toward the temple in Jerusalem (Jonah 2:4)⁵⁷

Jerusalem is seen to be the heart of the earth in that Israel was to “Remember Yahweh from afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind. (Jeremiah 51:50).” This was Yahweh’s central place of worship. He set Jerusalem in “The midst of the nations and countries that are round about her. (Ezekiel 5:5)”

I have had other thoughts concerning this phrase *heart of the earth* and what all it entails. However, the period of 3 days and 3 nights may definitely include the period of the Messiah’s entombment; it may not however, be the only place this time period includes.

What if this time period in the heart of the earth (Jerusalem) denotes the amount of time Yeshua would spend, in a “belly of the whale” experience, betrayed into the hands of men? Ralph Woodrow again informs us that:

According to George Lamsa, Bible translator and an expert on expressions used in his native East, the experience of Jonah provided the basis for a proverbial saying: people who were caught in a perplexing situation would say they were “in the whale’s belly.”⁵⁸

I myself sometimes say that I am “stuck in a bind” or “between a rock and a hard place.” Was Yeshua stuck in a similar situation in Jerusalem for three days and three nights? Yes indeed; a brief quotation from an article detailing this, allows us to understand what exactly happened to the Messiah.

As Jonah was thrown overboard into the sea, so Christ was “betrayed” – “delivered into the hands of sinful men” (Luke 24:7), “delivered unto the Gentiles” (Lk 18:32), rejected, abandoned, forsaken of God (Luke 17:20; Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34; Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:50). As Jonah was swallowed by the great fish, so Christ was swallowed by the evil which surrounded Him... To the mob near the garden, Jesus said, “This is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). “Behold the hour

⁵⁶ I am aware of Jonah’s use of the term *sheol*, in reference to his stay in the belly of the whale. *Sheol*, being the common Hebrew term for grave.

⁵⁷TDTN-RLS, p. 46 / TDTN-RLS also states on pp. 46-47:

That Jerusalem was regarded as the center of the earth is confirmed in rabbinical writings, by Jerome and other church fathers, in literature such as Dante, and many ancient maps... Moslems believed Mecca to be the earth’s center, and the Greeks held this belief concerning Delphi. But for the Jews, it was undoubtedly Jerusalem that was the heart of the earth.

⁵⁸ TDTN-RLS, p. 48

is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners” (Matthew 26:46) “The hour” begins with the kiss of Judas. From the kiss of Judas on Thursday, to the earthquake just before dawn on Sunday – “three days and three nights” without the protection of His Father – left in the heart of the earth.⁵⁹

Thus we now have 3 days and 3 nights comprising the time the Messiah was in the heart of the earth, out of the hands of the heavenly Father, and delivered into the hands of men.

I am definitely open to further understanding on what the phrase *heart of the earth* exactly means, as I am not dogmatically saying the above is beyond scrutiny. However, as of now, I do not believe the New Testament gives validity to the Messiah being *entombed* for 72 hours. In other words, I personally am not certain what Matthew 12:40 means, but I do believe I know what it *does not* mean.

Be Literal

As I stated to some measure before, I have been accused of not accepting a literal interpretation of the three days and three nights of Matthew 12:40. Many say, “The Messiah meant three full days, and three full nights, that settles it.”

It must however be pointed out, that those holding to a 72 hour entombment; likewise could be shown to have a non-literal interpretation of Matthew 12:40. Seeing this teaching would have the Messiah in the tomb for:

<u>Part of a Day</u>	<u>14th of Aviv</u>
<u>A Night and a Day</u>	<u>15th of Aviv</u>
<u>A Night and a Day</u>	<u>16th of Aviv</u>
<u>A Night and Part of a Day</u>	<u>17th of Aviv</u>

This teaching does have the Messiah in the tomb for three full nights, *but only two full days, and parts of two others*. Remember, those holding to a literal interpretation, have said “It must be three full days (12 hour days) and 3 full nights (12 hour nights).” There are probably some who do not believe in such a technical interpretation. For those who do or do not, the question arises, just how technical or literal should we be?

Conclusion and Unity

I feel I have successfully shown why I cannot hold to a 72 hour entombment. There are many questions that just have not been answered to my personal satisfaction. I recommend reading a couple other books on the topic for anyone a bit more interested. The *Time of the Crucifixion and Resurrection*, by Samuele Bacchiocchi, and pages 65 -74 of the book *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, by Harold W.

⁵⁹ *Three Days and Three Nights*; taken from www.aggelia.com/htdocs/threedaysnights.shtml, p. 16.

Hoehner. Both books can be referenced in the bibliography section at the end of this booklet.

Let me point out this simple fact. There is just too much evidence in Scripture disproving a 72 hour entombment. Therefore the phrase heart of the earth in Matthew 12:40 just cannot be referring to merely the grave or tomb. In fact, it does not even say grave or tomb, but instead, heart of the earth. If people would just realize this, it would make it much easier for them to let go of this belief.

As stated at the beginning of this presentation, I do not condemn anyone wishing to hold to a 72 hour belief. I do feel however that the best and most Scriptural choice in the matter is a sixth day crucifixion, and a first day resurrection. Hopefully you can see how I could believe such a teaching, and we can agree that although differing interpretations may arise, we are all striving to understand truth on important Biblical topics.

Bibliography of Abbreviated Books

TDTN-RLS = *Three Days and Three Nights: Reconsidered in Light of Scripture*, by Ralph Woodrow; Published by the Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association Inc. P.O. Box 21, Palm Springs, CA 92263-0021.

TCR = *The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection*, by Samuele Bacchiocchi; Published by Biblical Perspectives, 230 Lisa Lane, Berrian Springs, Michigan 49103.

ACCNT = *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament*; Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc.

EEH = *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History*; translated by C.F. Cruse; Hendrickson Publishers; Peabody, Massachusetts; 2000

FSTS = *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*; by Samuele Bacchiocchi; The Pontifical Gregorian University Press; Rome; 1977; Fifth reprint, May, 1979.

WJCFW = *Was Jesus Crucified on Friday or Wednesday?*; by Charles Wesley Ewing; no other information is available on this article.

CALC = *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*; by Harold W. Hoehner; Published by Academie Books; Grand Rapids, Michigan-Zondervan Publishing House; 1977.

HSB = *Hard Sayings of the Bible-ed. 2*; One-volume edition, 1996 by Walter C. Kaiser Jr., Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce and Manfred T. Brauch; Electronic Edition STEP Files 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa

